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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003293

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KOLY](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL OFFICIAL ON SOCIAL STABILITY, PRIDE IN
OLYMPICS

REF: BEIJING 3005

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) According to a prefecture-level Party Secretary from Anhui Province, new regulations on handling petitions will make local officials improve their efforts to deal with disgruntled citizens. Liu'an City Prefecture Communist Party Secretary Tang Linxiang (protect) told PolOff earlier this month that the pressure for economic development makes it inevitable that some people will be disgruntled and admitted that local governments often have to resort to "forceful measures" to clear the way for development. Local governments do not have the option of delaying projects based on small-scale opposition because the "core interests" of the majority require continued rapid economic growth. He argued that petitioners who take their grievances to Beijing have an inflated sense of self-importance and that their issues have "nothing to do" with Beijing. He claimed that incidents like the June 28 riot in Weng'an, Guizhou Province, are "extremely rare" and tend to happen in the more "backward" areas of China. In town to attend the Olympics Opening Ceremony, the Party official said that hosting the Olympic Games is a matter of immense pride to the Chinese who have been "looked down on" by the international community for over a century. End Summary

Rules Should Improve Handling of Petitions

¶2. (C) Tang Linxiang (protect), an FY 2000 International Visitor Program participant and currently Communist Party Secretary of Liu'an City Prefecture (population approximately 7 million) in Anhui Province, told PolOff August 7 that the July 24 regulations (ref A) on handling petitions will put additional pressure on local officials to improve their efforts to deal with disgruntled local citizens. Asked whether these rules would result in increased punishment of local officials, he responded that the issues that provoke petitions are usually related to a Central Government policy or dissatisfaction with compensation awarded. In such cases, as the issues are handled on the based on central guidelines, local officials would not be subject to discipline measures under the new rules. However, local officials would be censured under the new regulations if their high-handed or rough handling of a petitioner leads to an incident.

Development Also Maintains Social Stability

¶3. (C) Tang noted that the Central Government's paramount

concern for social stability is driving its efforts to improve the handling of petitions. He argued, however, that continued development is also key to maintaining social stability. To illustrate the point, he said a local government may make a decision on a development project that will result in the relocation of families. Perhaps 90 percent of them will be amenable to taking the Government's initial offer of relocation and compensation. Over the next several months, local officials may be able to persuade additional families to leave as well. At some point, however, local authorities will have to use more "forceful measures" to remove the holdouts. Such measures are taken because far more people benefit economically from the project than are disadvantaged.

Development Cannot Be Delayed

14. (C) Because of the need to sustain high growth rates, development projects cannot be delayed for too long, Tang remarked. He recalled a local dispute he witnessed during his International Visitor Program in 2000, when he attended a town council meeting in Springfield, Massachusetts, deliberating whether to pave a local road. He said that the community was equally divided on the issue so action on the issue was delayed. Although he noted strong feelings voiced on both sides of the issue, the dispute was handled in a civil manner, and townspeople had the option of deferring the decision. Tang was impressed with the democratic nature of the whole process, but he assessed that because most of the participants were affluent, the issue did not affect their

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"core interests." He commented that in Anhui, projects cannot be delayed over local opposition because people are struggling to get ahead and their core interests require rapid economic development. Tang argued that Chinese society lacks the "quality of people" that America and Europe have and that it will take at least 100 years to raise the "quality" of the average Chinese to that level. For this reason, he argued, China is not ready for the kind of democracy on local issues that he witnessed in the United States.

Petitioners Cases "Have Nothing to Do" with Beijing

15. (C) Despite local government efforts to assuage the disgruntled, there will always be a few who will want to take their cases to Beijing for redress, Tang said. He argued that these petitioners have an exaggerated sense of self-importance and that their issues have "nothing to do with Beijing." In fact, he averred, the petitioners are simply trying to maximize compensation or try to take revenge on local officials by trying to get them in trouble. Beijing is not particularly interested in hearing from the petitioners, Tang argued, and therefore the Central Government encourages local officials to deal with the problems at home, prevent petitioners from coming to Beijing, or intercept those who do try to travel. Tang commented that because Central Government Leaders are frequently portrayed meeting local people and showing concern about individual local problems, locals increasingly believe that President Hu Jintao or Premier Wen Jiabao will take a personal interest in their problems.

"Incident" Could Cause Problems for Local Officials

16. (C) Tang admitted that he is concerned that even if he and his subordinates handle cases by the rules, if a "major incident" occurred, the Central Government might punish local leaders to show that the Center is responsive to local people's concerns. That said, Tang argued that incidents such as the June 28 riot in Weng'an, Guizhou, are "extremely rare" and tend to happen in the more "backward" areas of

China. He said that even though his prefecture lags behind the development level of the coastal areas, the quality and education levels of the local officials are relatively high, and people are generally content with their improving standards of living.

Olympics a Matter of National Pride

17. (C) Tang commented that hosting the Olympics has been an extremely proud moment for the Chinese people. He noted that the China has felt "very looked down upon" by other countries and hosting the Games has been an opportunity to show China's accomplishments and shed this inferiority complex. (Note: The concept of China's "century of humiliation, spanning from the Opium War in 1839 to the founding of the PRC in 1949, is ingrained in the psyche of many Chinese and embedded in China's education system.) Tang commented that "99.9999 percent" of Chinese were opposed to the March 14 uprising in Tibet and the August 4 attack in Kashgar, incidents which Tang said were intended to disrupt China's effort to host the Olympics. Tang, who was in Beijing to attend the Opening Ceremony, commented that he wanted to nominate a model worker or farmer to attend the ceremony. However, because different areas in Anhui Province wanted to allocate the tickets differently, the provincial leadership decreed that only Party Secretaries should attend so as not to create jealousy or criticism, Tang said.

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